

The broadcast flag is a terrible mistake that if implemented will do lasting damage to the computer and communications industries in the US, and may in fact erase the competitive advantage we have over the rest of the world. Since these industries play a key role in our national security, we can ill afford to take actions that will damage them.

I have worked in the computer industry for over 25 years. Our industry creates tremendous wealth for our country. Key to our industry has been an absence of government intrusion into the design of the hardware and software systems. Steve Jobs did not need government approval to field the Apple II. IBM did not need government approval of the design of the the original PC in 1981. Bill Gates did not need government assistance on the design of Windows. Mark Andreesen did not need to ask the government how he would be allowed to write Netscape. Bob Metcalfe did not need to use government approved chips in his original 3COM ethernet cards in 1986. Len Bozak's original CISCO routers did not have to monitor network packets, looking for the broadcast flag, in 1988.

The broadcast flag proposal, which is so innocent in appearance, would spread government involvement throughout all areas of the computing industry. All of the companies mentioned above would have carried a huge burden had this proposal existed when those companies were trying to create new business sectors. Other companies, perhaps in other countries, would have been able to seize the lead.

I would expect to see this kind of proposal mooted in the EU, where government over-regulation is a habit; or perhaps in China, where intrusive government monitoring is a way of life. But to see it in the US is a bit shocking.

Please do not approve this proposal. Please do not intrude entertainment-industry concerns into the workaday world of computing. Please do not compromise our national security by handicapping our country's most vibrant industrial structure with the heavy hand of an ill-conceived regulation.

Sincerely,

Ron Minnich